

Seattle University

ScholarWorks @ SeattleU

The Spectator Online

Newspapers

4-17-2024

2024-04-17 Trump's Image, Legal Cases and Fundraising Efforts

Hannah Mwangi
Seattle University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/spectator-online>

Recommended Citation

Mwangi, Hannah, "2024-04-17 Trump's Image, Legal Cases and Fundraising Efforts" (2024). *The Spectator Online*. 1262.

<https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/spectator-online/1262>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Newspapers at ScholarWorks @ SeattleU. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Spectator Online by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ SeattleU.



The Spectator • April 17, 2024 • <https://seattlespectator.com/2024/04/17/trumps-image-legal-cases-and-fundraising-efforts/>

Trump's Image, Legal Cases and Fundraising Efforts

Hannah Mwangi, Staff Reporter

Former President Donald Trump has sanctioned a voice for the American people. It's a voice tethered to his following of working class voters that defines both education and income levels.

The self-proclaimed "Second Coming of God" promises the GOP to "Make America Great Again" while ongoing four criminal cases, involving business fraud, election interference and mishandling documents, wait in hopes of immunity from prosecution until Election Day comes November.



Annabelle DeGuzman-Carino

There is anticipation that he will work his way through his electoral campaign in an effort to pull off the "greatest heist" in Western politics and secure a second term.

To make sense of the situation, I sat down with Caitlin Carlson, chair and professor of the communication and media department, James Clune, lecturer of communication and media Studies, and Patrick Schoettmer, associate teaching professor of American politics, who have been following Trump, his legal cases, image and fundraising efforts. Our exchange went as follows.

Legal Cases Summary and Victimology

PS: Trump has four major cases pending. He has the New York hush money trial, related to behaviors that happened in 2016 where he is accused of having arranged for the payment to the adult film actress Stormy Daniels, in order for her to keep quiet then hid those transactions from official reports so that they wouldn't be leaked before the election.

The second case is another state-level trial, where [Trump] is being accused of election interference, in particular, trying to coerce the Secretary of State of illegally removing votes from the voter rolls in order to assure his election.

In Miami, we have a third case where he's accused of mishandling state documents and failing to comply with lawful order to return them.

And in D.C., we have the fourth case where he's accused of playing a leading role in orchestrating the January 6th insurrection.

HM: Given the nature of his indictments, how has Trump's reputation, within the Republican Party, survived this long?

JC: He's done a masterful job of framing his indictments as persecution and that feeds into his larger populist narrative of the government being this 'deep state' that's out to get him.

CC: He is very consistent with that messaging and plays on that conspiracy. [Some voters are convinced that he is] unjustly being prosecuted, and so they're easily willing to look the other way and not acknowledge these real crimes, because to them, they're not.

The Golden Image Sold

HM: Trump's personality, his likeness, has gone way past the GOP and politics in general. His depiction is reproduced on merch, in music, on film, etc. What is Trump doing right to have mustered his cult-like fandom?

JC: There's a large number of the population that is looking for a strong, male leader. That is the populist idea. Who, when Donald Trump says, 'I, alone, can fix it,' that's really attractive to them. He's been really smart at recognizing and connecting with the frustrations of a large part of our country who see themselves as stuck.

His following is significantly not college-educated and white and recognize themselves as not receiving whatever it is they think they deserve, not getting their fair share of American wealth, and they resent that. The appeal is that Trump is here to defend them. 'They're not after me, they're after you, and I just happen to be standing in the way and I'm happy to do so.'

His physical presence is impressive. He'll step out of a plane that has a big jet with 'TRUMP' on the tail, and of course, his displays of wealth are attractive because people equate that with success. When he announced in 2016 that he was going to become a presidential candidate, he came down the golden escalator, all of that appeals to people who are looking for a strong leader.

PS: A lot of the issues that Trump raises, that holds that sense of aggrievement and disenchantment with modern America, resonates with his voters. There's a perceived threat, to that group in particular, of a potential loss of status as American cultural values continue to liberalize, become less racist, less misogynistic, and in political science literature, when people feel their status is threatened, they tend to become much more receptive to more reactionary responses. Part of what we see happening on the Republican side is a textbook embrace of less democratic approaches to politics.

HM: The businessman-turned-reality TV star-turned-politician-turned-shoe salesman debuted his line of metallic gold sneakers and a pair was bought by Roman Sharf, one of the watch world's best dealers, for \$9,000 at a sneaker conference in Philadelphia. The announcement debuted the day after a New York Judge ordered Trump and his Organization to pay over \$355 million as part of a civil fraud case.

CC: Oh, God, what a mess. Trump's perception of the other [those outside his base] is so narrow, that instead of suggesting student loans, housing prices, employment opportunities, things young people actually care about, to approach them, his campaign says 'I know how to connect with young, Black voters. Sneakers.' I'm not under the impression that they're actually buying them, [the purchasers will be] the same Trump MAGA voters who have been buying and selling all kinds of merchandise. It signals what they're part of, that 'I'm in this club.' So, to align yourself with his party affiliation, you buy into his image.

Fundraising Efforts

HM: Small dollar contributions from Trump's supporters remain enthusiastic in fundraising not just his re-election campaign, but to protect themselves from Biden in funding the fines from his allegation. How does he hope to reign in more money?

PS: Trump's fundraising efforts have been focused mostly at his base. We've only recently seen big dollar Republican donors who had been backing other candidates in the Republican primary and aren't enthusiastic about another Trump run.

Many of them stated that they thought that if Trump was nominated, the Republicans would lose again. But now that Trump is a Republican nominee, a lot of them are coming around to supporting him and a big motivation for that support is that in 2025, the tax cuts that the Republicans passed in 2017 expire. Joe Biden has already said that he will not support renewing them. So if Biden wins re-election, their taxes go up.

They don't want to support Trump. They do want to support tax cuts. And as Trump is their only avenue towards keeping those tax cuts, they're reluctantly coming on board. A lot of the issues that people might have concerns with for a second Trump administration, while they might find problematic, won't personally affect them. Tax cuts, however, will personally affect them. When it comes to weighing the costs of voting for him versus the payoff, the payoff just looks a lot bigger.